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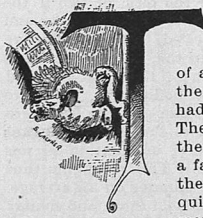
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

BRUSH PLAY.

BY LEWIS F. DAY.



THE late Owen Jones suggested that "we are rather tempted to believe that the various forms of the leaves of a Greek flower have been generated by the brush of the painter." He need have had no hesitation in asserting it as a fact. The idea of those forms being founded upon the growth of the honeysuckle is as much a fable as the popular legend concerning the origin of the Corinthian capital. It is quite possible that some later pot-painter may have seen a resemblance between the brush forms he was in the habit of producing and the young buds of the honeysuckle; (it may as well have occurred to him as to us;) and he may then have exaggerated the likeness in his work; but the resemblance to honeysuckle is, in most instances, of the very faintest. On the other hand it is impossible for any one who has worked with a long-haired brush, or "tracer," to come away from the vase room of the British Museum without feeling convinced that the painted ornament is very emphatically brush-work—that is to say produced, and in great measure suggested, by the use of the brush. There could be no better proof of this than the fact that, though it is so exceedingly difficult to copy it in any other way, it is so exceedingly easy to reproduce it freely with the brush; and that if you proceed to design with a firm and springing "tracer," you will involuntarily produce some such forms as are to be found on the Etruscan vases. And though, no doubt, this would be due partly to familiarity with the ancient forms, an unconscious exercise of memory in



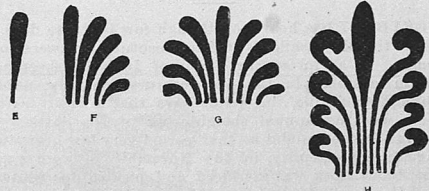
Example of Direct Brush-Work.

fact, it cannot be memory only; for you will find similar, and sometimes the same forms, in all the ornament that has been invented brush in hand. Compare the Greek work with any other ancient ornamental painted pottery. Compare it with the detail of the Early-English glass-painting, and you will find something more than casual resemblance. The family likeness is unmistakable, and so is the fact that they are all very certainly sprung from the brush. The Greek brush-work is a typical illustration of apt ornament, and deserves to be considered for a moment. The scheme of ornament once determined, we can imagine the painter proceeding, brush in hand, to put in the patterns, inventing or adapting as he went on, and, as he worked for the most part in one pigment only, producing the requisite tone by the comparative fullness or openness of the pattern. Aiming at no great originality, content to play variations upon the primitive brush patterns, he just put in the design that occurred to him, or that he felt was wanted. He had, no doubt, from the first a general notion of the kind of thing he meant to do; but he no more knew the exact design he was going to paint than we know beforehand the words our thoughts will take in utterance. His words were so many strokes of the brush.

The spontaneity of this brush-speaking is remarkable. The first natural ejaculation of a long-haired sable brush is the upward stroke A. The delicate gradation in its outline is due entirely to the play of the brush, thickening as the pressure is increased, and tapering off again as the stress is relaxed. If you keep your hand in the same position, and proceed to make a succession of these brush flicks (B) they range themselves, as a matter of course in the order shown in example C, becoming smaller and smaller as they radiate at a less and less distance from the axis of your wrist. Repeat this process on the other side and you have the common form of anthemion. The other common form, which has more resemblance to the honeysuckle, is produced in a similar manner, only by commencing at the top with a blot or blob of the brush, which must be full of color, and gently drawing the brush away to a point below. The following examples show the stroke E, the succession of strokes F, and the complete figure G. A less familiar variety of the ornament is shown in H. Sometimes the strokes were less springing and still



less honeysuckle-like, as in J. Similiar patterns were almost



as easily produced by painting-in the ground, and leaving the pattern in the color of the clay, as in the border given below.

The common fret or key patterns are equally characteristic of the brush. This may seem not so easily credible to those who are unacquainted with the use of the brush, and who know these patterns only in the printed illustrations of them, where all the character has been eliminated by the lithographer, who has substituted for it a mechanical correctness (?) of his own. If they will refer to the vases in the British Museum, they will see at once that mechanical exactness is the last quality that could be laid to their account.

Next to the free brush-flick nothing is so easy to draw with a brush as straight lines of this character. It requires only a blunt brush and a hand firm enough and light enough to maintain always a delicate and even pressure. The difficulty occurs at the angles, and the ancient pot-painters scarcely attempted any great accuracy there. The drawing of a simple fret was done right off in this manner:



the horizontal bounding lines were first drawn, probably by holding the brush steady and making the vase revolve on a pivot; the painter then drew a series of upright lines at regular intervals; from these he drew, at top and bottom, horizontal lines, to right and left respectively; to each of these were attached again shorter vertical lines, which were finally united by other short horizontal strokes, and the pattern was complete. The accompanying diagram may make this more clear.



Example of pattern left in the natural color of the ground.

The Greeks saved themselves much trouble in this respect by habitually interrupting the long horizontal bands by means of rosettes or pateræ, leaving themselves only short lengths to deal with.

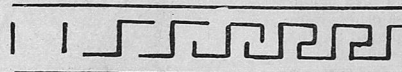


Diagram showing construction of fret pattern

The familiar wave scroll may be sketched in two or three different ways. It is as easy to sketch it in *à la grecque* as it is difficult to put it in with the mechanical exactness of modern imitators.

We have instances of ornament which is nothing but brush-play. The painter just amused himself by letting the brush go, almost without guidance — and watching the curves that came of it, much as he might have watched the wreaths of smoke curling upwards from his pipe.

The forms first suggested by the use of the brush happened in the end to suggest material forms, and so by degrees some imitation of nature became not uncommon. But for the most part, and until a very late period, the Greeks continued to let the brush control the manner of rendering it. Here is a pattern of which it may be as truly said that it consists of brush strokes arranged in the order of leaflets, as



Example of brush-play.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

DECORATING FINE PORCELAIN.

By ENID E. BENNETT.

Number Three.



Brush-leaf.

of leaf forms modified by the brush. The bud forms also grew out of the brush. Indeed, few if any of the forms borrowed from nature appear to have been selected without due reference to the facility with which they could be rendered. It is self-evident that the artist arrived through brush-work at natural forms.

In this they differed widely from the Japanese, whose art came through nature to much the same conventional conclusion. The character of a great deal of Japanese foliage is the simple result of attempting to render nature as directly as possible with the brush. Working from nature, brush in hand, the Japanese artist almost unconsciously translated his original into the vernacular of china painting—into brush-work.

It is curious to notice this point at which, contrary to all expectation, Greek art and Japanese for a moment join hands. The Japanese rendering of the chrysanthemum overleaf are as much like honeysuckle as any anthemion, and might pass for Greek almost.



Greek.

There is some similarity also in the Greek and Japanese rendering of the buds; and there is something again in the Japanese bird below that reminds one of Greek brush-work.

It is deeply significant of the connection between all apt workmanship, that artists of two such distinctly different types, working on such different principles, and according to such different traditions, should arrive (the one through brush-



Greek bud-forms.



Japanese Peony.



Japanese Chrysanthemum Flowers.

work to nature, the other through nature to brush-work) at forms of ornament that may be said to overlap one another; the apt form seems to be almost inevitable. A fact like this says more than words can say. The accumulated experience of the masters is not to be ignored. Wherever progress has been made, it has



Japanese Bird.

always been in the direction to which the old ways led. Design and workmanship have risen to a higher point, not when materials and tools have been despised, but when apter, fitter, more sympathetic treatment has been adopted, when more idiomatic expression has been found.

UPON detail the character of every style of decoration depends, and originality is secured by getting rid of customary combinations and forms, and attending only to the qualities requisite for good composition, such as breadth, proportion and elegance. The decorator should seize upon new forms with their countless suggestions for thoughtful application. It is in the versatility and taste thus shown that life and vivacity of aspect are contributed. A symmetrical treatment is by no means necessary at all times. In variety of detail one form may be arranged to balance another. We see architects boldly carrying this idea out in their facades in projections and recesses, thus inducing very effective contrasts.

THE art of jeweling is an excellent method for giving additional richness and beauty to bric-a-brac, decorated with enamel colors. On many rare and priceless articles expensive jewels have been used, but those prepared for ordinary purposes are drops of glass composition of Bohemian manufacture. They are of skillful hand-made workmanship, and may be procured in cut and uncut form, in imitation of the ruby, sapphire, emerald, turquoise, topaz, pearl, amethyst and opal. They may be appropriately used on any piece of ware intended for display, for the borders of plates, on cups and vases. The prices vary with the size, the tiny jewels being designed for small articles or to use in a set pattern. The bottoms are flat, so that they may be readily attached to the china. This is seldom left plain, and they are finished with a rim of gold. There is a cement which comes especially prepared for attaching them to the porcelain. It is applied in a minute dot wherever it is desired to place a jewel, and after carefully setting it upon the cement, the jewel should be gently pressed down. This preparation is procured in the form of a powder, which must be well mixed with turpentine and essence of grasse into a paste, which is then used as described.

In firing porcelain that is jeweled, great care is required to guard against an injurious degree of heat, as a low temperature in the kiln is alone suited for this purpose. Otherwise the jewels would melt and flow out of their proper shape. Raised gold work may be used as a setting by having the paste for this as a foundation instead of the cement. The ware is then fired preparatory to gilding the design in relief, and the portion surrounding the jewels is thus finished with the gold at the same time. An opportunity for the display of one's taste is offered in selecting jewels that will harmonize in size and coloring with the general decoration of the ware. A variety is sometimes given by frosting all or a portion of an article. This is accomplished by the use of crystal pearl covering, which may be described as a crystal sand, which is evenly sprinkled on. A coating of essence of grasse is first brushed upon the porcelain or design which has been fired, and then the crystal pearl covering is dusted over it when it will be ready for the second firing. This is so easily done that it well repays the small amount of trouble required when such an effect is sought for. In new styles of decoration silver and gold are largely employed in conjunction, forming a beautiful contrast and giving an effect of great richness and beauty to an otherwise simple design. Dead or mat gold is generally used; often with a raised outline of the same around a design, on a delicately tinted or a very dark ground. A fish service lately seen had a border of old blue, upon which were sprays of gold and silver sea-weed in alternation. The center of the platter was decorated with a large fish, the upper part of brown, blending into a pinkish tone on the under side, and then into white, where white enamel was employed. The scales upon the fish and all the outlines were in gold, and the water lines in silver. Aquatic plates were in gold and silver used together. The individual plates had borders to match, but the fish design in the center of each was differently arranged.

One of the handsomest decorations of this character may be carried out by painting a golden net work diagonally across the dish with two rather large fish lying within. The center of the platter should be first tinted very delicately to resemble sea water, by mixing vert pomme (apple green) and vert bleu riche (deep blue green), about half of each, letting the tint be darkest at the ends. All color must be removed where the gold lines are applied in painting the net. Put in water lines with vert brun No. 6, and decorate the border with sea shells and sea weed, making all lines and outlines for the entire design in gold. Various browns may be used in combination; greys made of black and blue, and rouge chais No. 1 or 2 for pinkish tones. Sea weeds, shells, dragon flies, water lilies and grasses, with different specimens of the finny tribe, offer material for pleasing and appropriate designs.

A dainty way to paint plates for raw oysters is to delicately tint each depression, powder the edge with gold, and paint fern-like sprays between the shells.

Another set recently seen had a very dark tone of color around each plate, blending through various shades into white. Rich dark reds, dull blues, greens and browns, in their lighter tones as they merge into the porcelain, give delicate coloring. A suitable finish is given the edge of each depression and also the rims of the plates with dead gold. These different colors form a pleasing variety, and, in combination with the gold, make quite an attractive oyster set.

Game plates are painted with wild birds, deer, bits of hunting scenes, and, in fact, whatever may be suggestive of their use that can be turned into an appropriate decorative design.

Flowers are a favorite subject with all amateurs, and for fancy